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TWO OPTIONS FOR U.S., INCREASED INTERVENTION OR NEGOTIATION

One year after the general offensive of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, when the U.S. intervention was sharply increased to prevent the collapse of the Christian Democrat-Military dictatorship, El Salvador is once again at the centre of international attention. Today, public opinion in Europe, and increasingly in the United States itself, has recognised that the U.S. government is supporting the interests of a brutal minority against the aspirations of the Salvadorean nation to end 50 years of military rule and establish peace, social justice and democracy.

In the last two years, U.S. policy has resulted in the murder of 30,000 civilians at the hands of the Salvadorean security forces, and created 600,000 refugees. Today the Reagan administration is confronted with the failure of its "pacification" plan, which had involved increased military intervention under

the cover of the March "election" plan, and is left with two options: either to accept the solution proposed by the international community of a negotiated political solution involving the opposition alliance (the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR)), or to continue its present policy in the hope of a military solution to the conflict. The second option will extend the conflict to the Central American and Caribbean region and raise the already horrific level of destruction, loss of life and suffering.

THE VIETNAM PARALLEL

Parallels with the Vietnam war are being drawn, and angrily denied by the Reagan administration. While there are differences between the two fights, it is important to consider how the

SPECIAL FEATURE ON GUATEMALA

escalation of US military action against a national liberation struggle is conducted. The U.S. intervention in Vietnam lasted from 1954, when it came to the aid of the French colonial forces, until the spring of 1975 when the Vietnamese popular forces achieved victory. South Vietnam became a testing ground for new U.S. weapons and tactics against guerrillas. The general elements of the counter-insurgency strategy applied in Vietnam, and which has been applied by the U.S. throughout the Third World to defend its interests, involves escalation through a series of stages:

- 1) **PREVENTIVE WAR** — improvement of intelligence and communications for the local security forces; technical training for local police and military officers by the U.S.; selective assassination; and torture.
- 2) **SPECIAL WAR** — provision of military aid; participation of advisers in tactical operations; control of overall strategy; supervision of command structure of local forces, which carry out the fighting.
- 3) **LOCAL or LIMITED WAR** — U.S. military units participate directly in the fighting; U.S. takes control of command structure of local forces at all levels.

Between 1961 and 1965 the U.S. was fighting a "special war" in Vietnam aimed, to use the words of the Vietnamese, at "crushing the people's armed forces, subduing the population through terror and reoccupying areas controlled by the popular forces". It is to the early phases of this stage of counter-insurgency strategy that the present U.S. intervention in El Salvador corresponds. In Vietnam the 'special war' lasted from 1961-65 and was followed by a further ten years of aggression, the involvement of 600,000 U.S. troops, participation by armed forces from Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and other allies, the extension of the conflict to Laos and Cambodia, and the saturation bombing of a small agricultural country isolated diplomatically beforehand and using more bombs than were dropped in the whole of the Second World War.

HAIG DEFINES DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VIETNAM AND EL SALVADOR

On February 5th Alexander Haig again refused to rule out the use of military force in the Caribbean and Central American region. Haig said that it was wrong to draw parallels between the U.S. involvement in the region with involvement in Vietnam.

When questioned about a possible Vietnam parallel he replied that "the Central American case is very, very different". In the Vietnam case, he said the United States had difficulty deciding whether the country was "a vital challenge to fundamental American interests".

"Had it been demonstrated that South Vietnam was indeed a vital challenge to fundamental American interests, then perhaps some of the conduct of the whole affair would have been somewhat differently handled," he said.

Unlike Vietnam however, El Salvador is at the heart of Washington's strategic concerns. Describing the situation in Central America, Haig said, "it could threaten even our closest neighbours. We are in effect at the very core of United States hemispheric interests."

"PACIFICATION" AND ELECTIONS

In the first months of the Reagan administration, U.S. analysts wrongly calculated that the FMLN could be eliminated with ease. Intervention was justified by the State Department's White Paper on "Communist aggression" from Nicaragua and Cuba, although this was rejected in Western Europe and later revealed to be fraudulent. In June 1981 Thomas Enders of the State Department revealed the election plan that was to bring a "political solution" to the conflict. The terms of this plan excluded participation by the FMLN-FDR, which meant that for the plan to succeed the FMLN would have to be eliminated or at least marginalised by March 1982.

This was to be achieved in nine months with the support of the U.S. Military assistance included: 20 helicopters, communication and transport equipment, upgrading of weapons, expansion of the size of the army, creation of a Rapid Deployment battalion (the "Atlacatl" battalion), U.S. advisers, and increased participation by the Honduran armed forces. At the same time U.S. economic support was given for the bankrupt Salvadorean economy.



Helicopter gunship in action.

During 1981 more than 30 major offensives against the FMLN-controlled areas did not inflict a single serious setback on the guerrilla forces, however the policy of "subduing the population through terror" resulted in 16,000 civilian deaths in 1981.

FMLN OFFENSIVE

During the last three months, actions by the FMLN have demonstrated a substantial increase in the abilities of the popular army, which has been striking the Junta's army with unprecedented effect. Heavy casualties have been inflicted on the junta's army and substantial quantities of arms captured in the seizure of several important military posts and on January 31st an FMLN unit destroyed about 50% of the regime's airforce in Ilpango military airport, 8 kms east of San Salvador.

The guerrilla presence in the countryside has been extended, with the main highways cut for extended periods, while there has been an increase of guerrilla actions in the urban areas. In the provincial capitals of San Miguel, Usulután and San Vicente, there has been heavy fighting between popular militia and guerrilla forces on the one hand and the Junta's troops. This resurgence of the popular forces in the towns, where the Junta maintains its strongest military units is an expression of the underground work of the popular organisations.

On January 22nd, commemorating two years of popular unity and the fiftieth anniversary of the 1932 insurrection, the FMLN began transmissions from Radio Farabundo Martí, their second radio station. This new radio broadcasts from Chalatenango province, 100 km from the capital and within the radius of actions by the army's two principal infantry brigades. Also in this period fighting has begun in Ahuachapán, the westernmost province bordering on Guatemala, which means that the popular forces are now operating in all fourteen of El Salvador's provinces.

SECOND PHASE OF U.S. INTERVENTION IS UNDERWAY

These successes have had an effect on the morale of the Junta's army, which suffered 3,000 casualties in 1981. The "Atlacatl" battalion, formed by 800 highly trained helicopter-borne troops, that was considered the ideal solution for anti-guerrilla actions by the U.S. advisers, has suffered heavy casualties and a 10% rate of desertion according to the Ministry of Defence.

Following the attacks on Ilpango airbase and on the ANTEL telecommunications centre, Dean Hinton, the U.S. ambassador stated his lack of confidence in the information being supplied to



Army vehicle destroyed by guerrillas.

him by the Salvadorean army, and said that in future his staff would obtain "first hand" information, signifying an increased presence by the U.S. at the war fronts.

In January it was revealed that 1,500 Salvadorean officers and troops were undergoing training at the U.S. Army's Special Forces bases at Forts Bragg and Benning in the United States. Two further Rapid Deployment battalions are to be formed from these soldiers.

The Reagan administration responded to the attack on Ilopango by granting 55 million dollars military aid from an emergency fund separate from the 28 million approved by Congress for 1982. This was nearly double the military aid received so far by the Salvadorean regime, and included 12 helicopter gunships as well as 16 fighter-bombers and troop transports.

In February General Wallace Nutting, the commander of the U.S. Army Southern Command responsible for all U.S. military activities in Central and Latin America, visited El Salvador. His visit was to assess the need for increased intervention and expressed the level of concern of the U.S. government.

The U.S. advisers are recommending that the size of the Salvadorean army is doubled to 50,000 men, which they estimate will give a 10 to 1 ratio of government troops to guerrillas, the ratio considered necessary by counter-insurgency theory for success. Such an increase in size will pose problems for the Salvadorean army which lacks sufficient officers, technicians and pilots to accommodate this increase. This can only be resolved by an increase in "advisers" from the U.S. or drawn from other Latin American armies. General Garcia, the Minister of Defence, has asked the United States for a further 150 helicopters and in February sent his Chief of Staff for discussions with the Argentinian military, who are the most likely to provide the needed "advisers".

THE ELECTION FARCE IN EL SALVADOR

The original objective of the March elections within Reagan's "Pacification" plan can no longer be realised, but the United States will still use them to deceive international opinion due to the participation of "observers" from countries including Britain. Turnout of even a tiny percentage will be put to good use by the United States news agencies, as the polling earlier in March in Guatemala demonstrates.

The United States would prefer a victory by Napoleon Duarte, the Christian Democratic leader, as so much of the justification for their policy has been centred on this politician but the Salvadorean oligarchy could use the elections as an opportunity to "democratically" displace Duarte. While measures have been taken to placate the oligarchy, including the halting of the Agrarian Reform and the placing of General Garcia in command of the armed forces, the oligarchy is not pleased with the limited reforms carried out by the Christian Democrats, particularly as they have not achieved their objective of "pacification". U.S. control of the situation is not guaranteed — the oligarchy has the example of their Guatemalan neighbours who are supported by Israel and Argentina and make no pretence of concern with "democracy" and Human Rights. There is consequently a strong possibility that the elections will be won by a coalition of extreme-right wing parties led by Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, whose association with the death squads is well known.

Concern for Duarte's survival was demonstrated in the recent attempt to assassinate Roberto D'Aubuisson, who blamed the Christian Democrats for the attack and by implication the U.S.

Whichever faction wins, the Organisation of American States and the Reagan administration have promised their support to the victors of the "democratic process", and continuity between regimes will be assured by General Garcia, who as Minister of Defence is the "strongman" in the present regime, and who is closely aligned with the interests of the oligarchy.

OPTIONS FOR MILITARY INTERVENTION

The Reagan's administration's sensitivity to international and domestic opposition means that U.S. forces will only be committed in the last instance. The first option for intervention by foreign armies will be unlikely to include U.S. military units.

If Duarte wins the elections he will be able to call for military

"Very simply, guerrillas, armed and supported by and through Cuba, are attempting to impose a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship on the people of El Salvador as part of a larger imperialistic plan. If we do not act promptly and decisively in defence of freedom, new Cubas will arise from the ruins of today's conflict."

Reagan addressing Organisation of American States,

24/2/82.

support from the newly-created "Central American Democratic Community" or from the Organisation of American States. The former organisation was set up at the beginning of this year by the U.S. in an attempt to give further credibility to its policies. It involves Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica, and the purpose behind its creation was revealed in the Tegucigalpa Declaration of January 29th, by which any member country can receive military assistance if its "democracy" is threatened.

Another option for intervention would be by a "Pan-American Army of Peace" led by the Argentinian Army, this would be requested by an extreme right-wing coalition emerging from the elections.

U.S. PREPARES FOR REGIONAL WAR

U.S. policy in El Salvador must be seen in the wider context of Central America and the Caribbean, an area traditionally considered by the U.S. as its "backyard". The administration regards El Salvador as the focal point of its regional strategy, and recent policy statements have revealed the extent of U.S. preparations for internationalising the conflict.

Strategic U.S. objectives in the region include destruction of the FMLN-FDR in El Salvador, of the emerging popular movement in Guatemala and sweeping the Nicaraguan Sandinista Revolution off the continent.

To achieve this the U.S. is establishing itself in overall command of the region's security forces to enable the U.S. military to take decisions which will be implemented by local troops.

This falls under the stated policy aim of the administration of destroying national liberation movements, which are now described as "international terrorism" and "Soviet instigated".

According to an administration programme adopted after a U.S. National Security Council meeting last November, and leaked to the Washington Post (Herald Tribune 15/2/82), a broad range of economic, political, military and propaganda measures, that will include participation by pro-U.S. regimes, has been approved. According to the Washington Post the programme is "designed to disrupt alleged Cuban-Nicaraguan supply lines to guerrilla forces in El Salvador".

Central to this plan is a "Public Information Programme", intended to restore support for U.S. regional policy. The arguments presented in this programme are identical to those used in the discredited State Department White Paper of February 1981, and includes publication of a second State Department White Paper on Cuba's "support for violence in Latin America". The recent statements by Jean Kirkpatrick,



U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, that Nicaragua is currently the "worst violator of human rights in Central America" and the circulation of photographs of "victims of Sandinista genocide" being burnt — in fact they were pictures of Red Cross officials burning dead Sandinistas to remove a health risk during the Somoza period — are evidently part of this "information" programme.

Within this plan the administration has authorised a 19 million dollar CIA programme for building political opposition to the Nicaraguan government, and for setting up "action teams" for military operations and intelligence work inside Nicaragua. These aggressions are apparently justifiable as they will be aimed at "the Cuban presence" in Nicaragua.

Another aspect is planning for the use of U.S. forces "to deter the introduction of Cuban military forces into Central America" a move that would only become conceivable in the event of an attack on Nicaragua involving troops from the U.S. or its regional allies, and which means in less ambiguous language, a U.S. naval blockade of Nicaragua's Atlantic coast in support of such an attack.

Also included is planning for "direct pressure" against Cuba with moves such as a "naval quarantine" to block Cuban domestic petroleum supplies, and "retaliatory air action" against Cuban forces and installations.

Other aspects of the plan, which are already in effect, include:

— The final form taken by Reagan's long awaited "Caribbean Basin Plan" that had been repeatedly postponed due to differences in the administration and opposition to its content from Mexico. The original talk of ploughing 11 billion dollars into the region over eight years gave way to the 340 million dollars for the first year announced by Reagan to the Organisation of American States on February 24th. The political objectives behind the allocation of these funds is clear enough: El Salvador, whose economy accounts for only 10% of the region's GDP receives 34% of the figure, while Nicaragua receives nothing.

— Additional military assistance for El Salvador and Honduras from a special emergency fund available to the President. The 55 million dollar military assistance to the Salvadorean dictatorship following the attack on the Ilopango airbase was drawn from this fund, which is supplementary to official military aid.

— The training programme by which the 1,500 Salvadorean officers and troops are receiving training at the U.S. Army Special Force bases in the U.S.

— Increased U.S. intelligence activity in the region. Since February the CIA stations in Central America have increased their strength, and aerial and "other surveillance activity" have been increased.

— Increased U.S. military presence in the Caribbean to demonstrate U.S. "concern and willingness to act". These measures have included a new command communications network, increased intelligence and military exercises in the region.

On December 1st a U.S. Forces Caribbean Command was established by the Pentagon at Key West, Florida, to "streamline the military structure by placing responsibility for the area in the hands of a single headquarters". The Naval Air Station at Key West is to be reopened, for "intelligence gathering".

To these elements must be added the announcement at the beginning of March that five new U.S. military bases are to be constructed, two of them in Colombia and Honduras, and the large NATO aero-naval manoeuvres off the north coast of Cuba. The objective of these manoeuvres, outside the traditional NATO sphere, was publicly stated to be a "warning" to Cuba. British ships participated.

U.S. INTERVENTION OPPOSED INTERNATIONALLY

International opposition to Reagan's current policy and alarm at the U.S. plan to regionalise the conflict has been demonstrated in recent months. In December the United Nations called for a negotiated solution to the Salvadorean war. Apart from the U.N., the Socialist International, Mexico, France and several European countries have urged the U.S. and the Salvadorean Junta to negotiate with the FMLN-FDR, and warned of the consequences of the war spreading to Central America and the Caribbean.

Inside the United States, Reagan is now opposed by the Democrat Party, Church and Human Rights groups and a grow-

ing body of public opinion. Recent opinion polls in the U.S. have shown a majority opposing U.S. intervention, and Democrat Congressmen who visited El Salvador in February have rejected Reagan's claim that human rights are improving. In March 100 Democrat Congressmen called on Reagan to negotiate an end to the war.

The recent proposals by the Mexican President Lopez Portillo to act as mediator in promoting a regional political solution between the U.S., the Salvadorean opposition, Nicaragua and Cuba, is supported by the FMLN-FDR.

The FMLN-FDR, in the interests of ending the conflict and preserving regional peace have presented a four-point programme for discussion which is based on restructuring the armed forces; the formation of broadly based government; a ceasefire and genuine elections.

TWO OPTIONS FOR REAGAN

The Reagan administration now has two options — to stop the aggression, or to widen the war in the hope of a decisive military victory. All the indications are that Washington has already chosen the second path. Nevertheless, recent statements by the administration indicate that it is concerned by opposition both within the U.S. and amongst its Western allies and it is therefore very important that the pressure is increased.

In Europe, Britain is the only country prepared to openly endorse Reagan's policy. The importance of the support that Reagan can derive from the British position is evident: it is then possible to demonstrate to international and domestic opposition that the administration's concern about fighting the "Communist threat" is shared by more countries than just the Latin American dictatorships.

The role that Britain can play in building Reagan's prestige is shown in the farcical plan to let him address Parliament and ride horses in Windsor Park.

To cut this support will deprive Reagan of an important argument with which to answer his domestic critics.

The Tory government must not be allowed to provide a platform for Reagan to justify his criminal policies of genocide and intervention in Central America and the Caribbean.



A letter from the FMLN to Reagan

The following is a letter sent by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) of El Salvador to President Ronald Reagan on January 18.

Mr President:

We have read with care your year-end message to the American people, in which you refer to efforts toward world peace, and more specifically to the fact that 'our hearts are anguished for those who suffer oppression' and that 'Americans begin the year with a renewed commitment to our ideals and with the determination that peace will have to be preserved and that freedom for all men will prevail.'

We would like to point out to you, Mr President, that we Salvadorans have suffered centuries of oppression and are suffering right now from repression by a military dictatorship that has been in power, without interruption, for more than 50 years. Our struggle is against that dictatorship.

If your heart is anguished by oppression, we cannot see why it is precisely your administration that has become the principal support of the military/Christian Democracy regime in El Salvador.

Far from aiding our people's quest of freedom, your administration has chosen to support a government that is responsible for more than 30,000 deaths in the short period of two years.

What then is the world peace you seek, if at the same time you offer military aid to a repressive government? The military and political assistance your government has provided to the Salvadoran junta has brought about, among other things, the prolonging of the war and the entrenchment in the seat of power of the most repressive elements of the Salvadoran government — those who do not even respect the lives of US citizens, as demonstrated by the murder of the four women religious workers in 1980.

The recent agreement to train 1600 troops from the junta's army at US bases confirms to us that your objective is not peace, but war — against our people.

Your administration has not only sent war material and military advisers, but is also helping to plan the strategy of extermination being carried out against our people. This is exactly what Under-Secretary of Defense Ike outlined in his recent testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs.

As part of this 'scorched earth' policy, the population itself becomes a military target, especially those who live in areas near the fighting. And the painful experience of many massacres shows how little the sex, age, religious beliefs, or noncombatant status of these victims matters.

Barely a month ago, between December 7 and 17, in Morazan province, the army systematically killed more than 1000 peasants, children, women, and old people. They were butchered, machine-gunned, or burned alive by the Atlacatl Brigade, which was trained and equipped with the military aid from your administration.

The Salvadoran people, who so greatly admire the progressive and democratic ideals of the people of the United States, cannot understand why you insist on pledging your support to a genocidal government. We cannot understand why the hard-earned dollars of US tax-payers go to support programmes of extermination instead of furthering peace and respect for human rights.

Your claims that the war in El Salvador is simply an aspect of the confrontation between your government and that of the Soviet Union seems to us to have nothing to do with the reality in our country. Salvadorans have joined the struggle because of the poverty and repression imposed on them by the oligarchy and the military.

We have taken up arms not because we love war, but rather because one military regime after another has closed off all democratic avenues for change and has forced us to make use of our legitimate right to rebellion.

It is the Salvadorans and Salvadorans alone who struggle daily against the dictatorship. We want to change the old and unjust social structures. The 30,000 dead were neither Russians nor Cubans. They were Salvadorans who yearned to live in peace and dignity.

The only outside forces in this conflict are the US advisers your government has sent. Portraying our war as part of an East-West conflict can only lead to its regionalisation and to a growing intervention by your country. This would cause still more suffering for the Salvadoran people, as well as for the people of the United States.

Your claiming that the solution to the Salvadoran conflict is through elections in March also has nothing to do with reality. How can a democratic process be guaranteed amid indiscriminate repression? If you are the one who decides the destiny of the United States, it is because you are in office by virtue of free elections. Americans went to the polls in peace, and this is the undeniable precondition for a people to be able to elect its leaders.

The Salvadoran government, far from creating the indispensable conditions for achieving such peace, is pushing ahead with a war of extermination against our people. These elections, then, are no solution, but

are simply one more farce that the military government has imposed on our people.

Mr President, the confidence your message expressed in preserving world peace needs to take concrete expression. In El Salvador, our Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front has made a public and generous offer to undertake peace talks that could lead to ending the war and building a democratic and just social order for all Salvadorans. The great majority of the international community has supported our proposal for a political solution, as is shown by the French-Mexican communique and the motion adopted by the UN General Assembly last December 16.

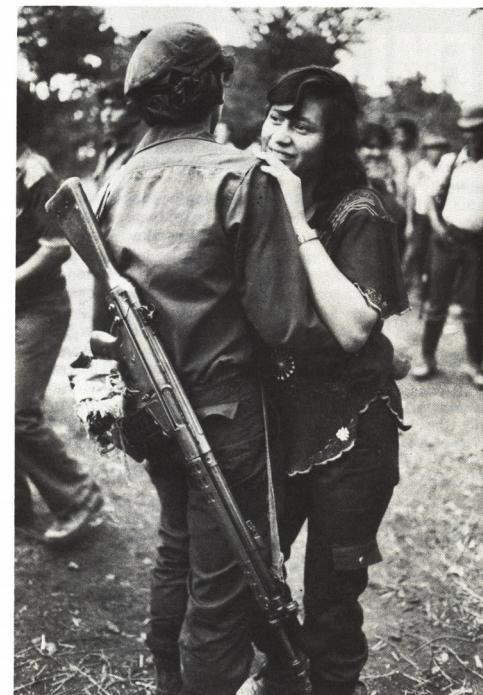
Our proposal calls for negotiations covering all topics. We are ready at a moment's notice to begin working out an agenda mutually agreeable to all parties, without any preconditions, in the presence of witnesses from other governments, and with the Salvadoran people fully informed about the progress towards a political solution. This is our contribution to peace, but we have noted your administration's opposition to a political solution.

What we have said leads us to respectfully request that you change your policy toward El Salvador. We only ask for the right to resolve our own problems by ourselves without foreign interference.

If, in this new year, your government is interested in and willing to pursue peace in the world, it has the chance to achieve such peace in El Salvador by dropping its opposition to a political solution and instead seeking friendly and just relations between our two peoples.

Sincerely,
Salvador Cayetano Carpio, Joaquin Villalobos, Ferman Cienfuegos, Shafik Jorge Handal, Roberto Roca





INTERVIEW WITH SALVADOREAN GUERRILLAS

In October 1981 the newsagency SALPRESS interviewed "Javier" and "Milton" two commanders of the Fuerzas Populares de Liberacion (FPL), one of the five organisations in the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front. These extracts are from the interview which appeared in the magazine "Dialogo Social" of Panama in its Nov-Dec issue.

WHAT IS THE FRAMEWORK OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE SALVADOREAN GUERRILLAS?

Our foreign policy is framed within the general strategy of protracted popular war, in which the war is fought as much in the military field as in the political and diplomatic fields. If the armed struggle is the basic focus, all three fronts are necessary and decisive within the total strategy.

In this context the struggle in the external front is subordinate to the political-military struggle and is directed to obtaining the same objectives as the political and military fronts.

Our foreign policy, as well as deriving from our general strategy, is based on a series of revolutionary principles such as considering the struggle inside the country as decisive. We appreciate international solidarity as an essential support, but we know that the fundamental struggle is being played out inside the country.

We respect the right of nations to free self-determination and we demand that that right be respected by others. We condemn all forms of colonialism, racism and discrimination. We subscribe to the principle of international solidarity and we are prepared to support popular liberation struggles to the best of our abilities, and to show solidarity with them.

Under these principles we will establish relations with any nation and organisation in the world.

Finally, apart from the principles and strategy, we specifically pursue our foreign policy according to the current state of the war.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE FOREIGN POLICY?

Our first and fundamental objective is to halt the escalating intervention by the United States. The people are capable of deciding their destiny in a short space of time if the escalating intervention does not continue. This intervention does not call into question the victory of the people, but obviously delays it and raises the cost in terms of blood spilt.

Our second objective is to broaden the international isolation of the Junta. To a large extent that depends on convincing other countries that the junta is pro-imperialist and is carrying out a policy of genocide. Those countries which have appreciated that have withdrawn their support.

Thirdly we try to inform people in as direct a way as possible what sort of government and society we are fighting for. To the extent that we have been able to explain our political program, which is the only alternative to lead our people out of their condition of misery and oppression, international support and solidarity with our struggle has been growing.

The fourth objective of our foreign policy has been to secure material support for the current needs of our people.

TO DATE WHICH COUNTRIES HAVE SUPPORTED THE DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES OF THE FMLN-FDR?

The support of the governments affiliated to the Socialist International has been fundamental, the declarations from their last meetings have been of firm support for the Salvadorean people. One government which has been playing a firm role has been Mexico. Following the traditional line of Mexican foreign policy, in every forum around the world it has maintained El Salvador's case that the right to free self-determination should be unrestricted and respected and it has condemned every type of intervention.

After Mitterrand's victory, France has turned into a bastion of support because we know that it will never support the interventionist policy of the U.S.. Mitterrand's government has worked out a clear policy with regard to El Salvador, which without any doubt backs our international policy against the interventionist and bellicose posture of the U.S.

HAS THE U.S. INTERVENTION MODIFIED THE CONCEPTION OF THE WAR HELD BY THE FMLN?

U.S. imperialism has been for El Salvador what it has been for the rest of the countries in the Central American area; the means of sustenance for the oligarchies and bourgeoisie.

For years the Salvadorean oligarchy and bourgeoisie have depended, in economic, military and political terms, on the whims and fancies of the different U.S. administrations.

U.S. intervention is not a phenomenon that suddenly appeared in January 1981, the date when the FMLN launched an attempt to seize power. It has been present for a long time past. For that reason the struggle that the Salvadorean people initiated in 1970, especially their political-military organisations, is an anti-oligarchic and anti-imperialist struggle. Within our strategy for seizing power we include the need to defeat imperialism. It is essential to be clear about that.

At the time when the Salvadorean people and their vanguard the FMLN made a bid to seize power from the oligarchy and its murderous military-civilian regime, U.S. imperialism saw that this was a real possibility and that its interests were in danger. So they shifted from basically preventive methods of control to methods of a punitive type. They immediately sent weapons, ammunition, dollars, helicopters, advisers, tanks, warships, and all sorts of war support for the Salvadorean Junta.

From that moment the intervention in our country has been growing. Imperialism understands that it has been defeated politically and that the Salvadorean people will never allow the yankees to decide their destiny. They know that terror and genocide cannot prevent our people's longing for freedom and justice. They see no other alternative than to defend their interests by military means, and they have already discussed the possibility of direct intervention and occupation of Salvadorean territory.

We have always been aware of yankee intervention because it has always been present in the life of our country. Its escalation has not altered our conception of the war, because we designed our strategy aware of that reality.

WHAT ROLE DO THE GOVERNMENTS OF HONDURAS AND GUATEMALA PLAY WITHIN THE INTERVENTIONIST POLICY OF THE U.S.?

The support of the governments of Guatemala and Honduras for the U.S. plans is absolute. However in Guatemala the growth and unstoppable advance of the armed revolutionary movement and the crisis in a system which is suffering from the effects of a dictatorship similar to that in El Salvador, has prevented the Guatemalan military regime from carrying out its assigned role.

The situation in Honduras is different. There the U.S. is trying to construct the principal base for counter-revolution in the area. Hence the rearming of the Honduran army, which in a few months has been transformed from an army of defence into an army of invasion.

The conclusive proof of the role that the Honduran armed forces are playing is the penetration by Salvadorean troops into Honduran territory recently so that they could attack FMLN positions from the Honduran border. That is the first stage. It will be followed by broader and more intensified joint operations.

One ought also to note the aggressive and counter-revolutionary posture of the Argentinian and Venezuelan governments.

Intervention by the armies of Guatemala, Honduras, Argen-

tina, and Venezuela is an alternative which U.S. imperialism has been contemplating for some time and for which we are prepared. We will not allow their aggressors' jackboot to remain on Salvadorean land.

IS PEACE IN THE REGION IN DANGER?

The growing intervention by U.S. imperialism; the aggression against El Salvador and Belize by the Guatemalan army; the aggression of the Honduran army, with their government's compliance in allowing ex-Somoza troops to attack Nicaragua from their country and the collaboration of one sector of the Honduran army with the Christian Democrat-Military Junta in El Salvador are eroding peace in the region.

The intervention by these armies makes it necessary that the peoples of those countries realise that Central Americans have always been brothers and that we should not let ourselves be dragged into fratricidal wars, manipulated by imperialism and the local oligarchies.

The situation in the region is daily more difficult, it will get worse for the imperialists if they continue with their politics of war. The region will become a thorn in their flesh.

THE WAR IN EL SALVADOR IS OFTEN COMPARED WITH THE WAR IN

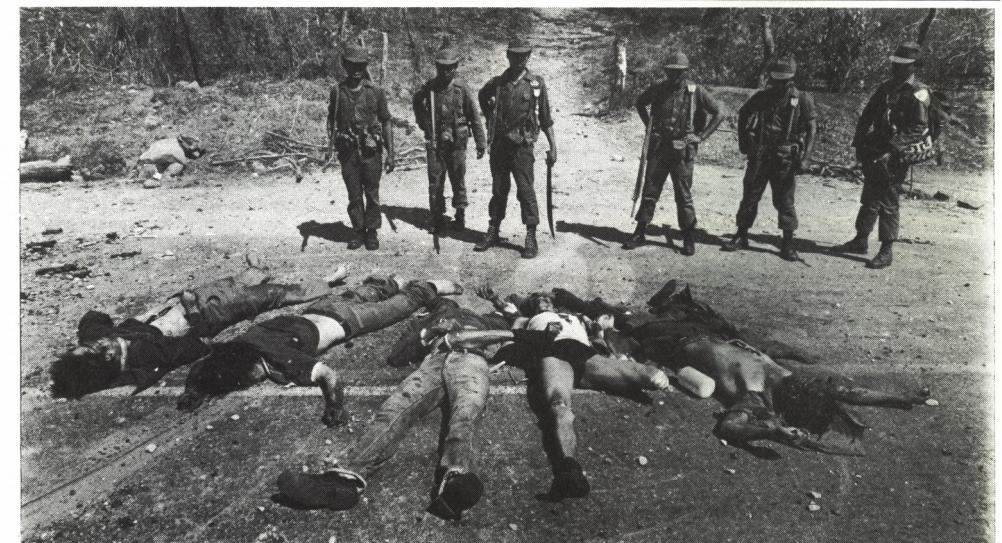
VIETNAM. COULD YOU POINT OUT ANY SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THESE TWO LIBERATION STRUGGLES?

It is a great honour to hear ourselves compared with the Vietnamese, who are an example of heroism, sacrifice, courage and astuteness, because after many years of war they managed to defeat imperialism and smash the North American war machine.

The Vietnamese with outdated equipment managed to demoralise the yankees and eventually to defeat them. We have always been aware of that example and have tried to follow their lead. The war in Vietnam was the struggle of a whole nation and that is the style of war that we have assimilated.

Based on the experience of the Vietnamese we have tried to use all types of weapons. For years we fought with rudimentary arms. Our country is a small one, with terrain that is unfavourable for revolutionaries because the land is flat, the vegetation is sparse, and the population is concentrated on the plain.

Taking these disadvantages into account and remembering the Vietnamese example, we pursue our struggle. We have tried to assimilate elements from the struggle of the Vietnamese people, applying them in a creative way to our specific circumstances.



HUMAN RIGHTS IN EL SALVADOR

A report on El Salvador for the current session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights was released on February 16th. Mr. Jose Ridruejo, a Professor of Law at Madrid University and a Legal Advisor to the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, prepared the report after a four day visit to El Salvador as a special U.N. representative.

Mr. Ridruejo blamed the increases in killings on government security forces and rightist paramilitary groups, "the special representative can affirm after weighing the evidence, that the violations which pertain to life, liberty and security appear for the most part — but not exclusively — to be the work of state officials and violent groups of the extreme right" the report said.

In an attempt to discredit the report, the authorities claimed that it was mainly based on material provided by the Legal Aid office, an organization they do not recognize on the grounds that it has been "infiltrated by communists". Statements like this are part of a long chain of slanderous affirmations, both from Salvadorean and US officials. They are intended to lessen the

impact on world opinion of the work of the Legal Aid office and of the El Salvador Commission on Human Rights.

However, the level of Human Rights violations in El Salvador and the brazen openness with which the government forces commit them have caused these violations to become common knowledge abroad; many cases of such repression have been documented first hand by foreign visitors to the country, both from independent agencies and the media. For instance, two Democrat Representatives, Tom Harkins of Iowa and James L. Oberstar of Minnesota, after visiting El Salvador in the third week of February stated at a news conference that "they rejected the (U.S.) Administration certification that El Salvador had made sufficient progress in curbing Human Rights abuses to qualify for continued U.S. military assistance". A team from the British Council of Churches also came to the same conclusion, pointing out in a press release on their return that the blame for these violations fell squarely on the junta and referred to an alarming shift from massacres in the countryside last year to a campaign of terror in the cities."

ELECTION FARCE TO BE MONITORED BY BRITAIN

It has been confirmed by the Foreign Office, British observers chosen from 'independent public figures' will be sent to El Salvador to monitor the elections for a Constituent Assembly on March 28th, the only obstacle they see for sending the observers is their 'security'. The British Government is going ahead single-handed, since no other European Government is lending its name to this charade and, notably, Canada has refused to participate.

Mr. Denis Healey, Shadow Spokesman for Foreign Affairs stated that "no one believes that those elections can be more than a macabre farce. There is not even an Election Register in the country. Opposition candidates are liable to be murdered by the pro-government death squads if ever they appear in public. An American diplomat suggested that in that case they could campaign from outside the country instead. It is difficult to think of any grounds on which the British Government should implicate itself with this shabby exercise, unless it is perhaps to cut a few million pounds off the cost of the new nuclear deterrent. One of those privy to the new nuclear Trident deal has explained that "the attitude of the American Administration is conditioned by the way the U.K. acts in the wider defence interest of the alliance and the United States". (The New Standard, Feb. 25)

A close political aide of the West German Chancellor, Mr. Helmut Schmidt, has described the forthcoming elections in El Salvador as "a farce". Mr. Hans-Jurgen Wischnewsky, Deputy Chairman of Mr. Schmidt's Social Democratic Party, told a news conference that the vote was meaningless since opposition candidates could not participate.

All the political parties registered for the elections are from the right. All of them committed to a war against the population. The Christian Democrats' record so far speaks for itself. The Nationalist Republican Alliance — ARENA — which is the only party actively "campaigning", chant as their slogan 'El Salvador will be the tomb where the reds end up' and their definition of 'red' is very wide indeed, their leader, Major Roberto D'Abuisson, whom former U.S. Ambassador White described as a 'psychopathic killer', compared Duarte with a watermelon: "green outside and red inside". Mario Redaelli, Secretary General of D'Abuisson's party stated that they would ask for napalm and that "we are fighting a war and civilians will be killed. They have always been. It's got to be that way."

General Medrano, former head of the national guard and the founder of the paramilitary organisation 'ORDEN', is now the leader of P.O.P., a political party that "accepts" the need to appear "democratic" and wear "civilian clothes" for the benefit of international opinion ... and so forth. To these elections the British government want to send observers as their contribution to bringing democracy and peace to El Salvador.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The government's campaign against Human Rights workers does not stop at defamation, at present Marianella Garcia of the El Salvador Commission on Human Rights and Roberto Cuellar of the Legal Aid office are both on the junta's death list. Maria Magdalena Henriquez and Ramon Valladares Perez from the Commission were murdered in October 1980, and their colleagues Carlos Eduardo Vides and Francisco Antonio Barraza together with the school teacher Norberto Hueso Martinez have been under arrest since December. They were captured in San Vicente by the army and then transferred to the cavalry garrison. International pressure has forced the junta to acknowledge their detention.

The work of the El Salvador Human Rights Commission, which was formed in 1972 for legal assistance and social service work, is beginning to be recognized internationally. A group of eighteen prominent figures from different sectors of Spanish society sent a letter to the President of the Nobel Prize Committee, Mr. John Sanner, explaining the reason why they considered that the prize should be awarded to the commission.



UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES OF THE WOMEN'S COMMISSION

We are coming to the end of our signature campaign calling for the release of four women prisoners held in the Women's Prison in Ilopango. We will be organising an activity at the time we submit the petitions to Duarte, the US Ambassador in the UK and perhaps to Margaret Thatcher and will be in touch with you about this soon.

Many people have been asking for further information about the prisoners and we have managed to gather a bit more information about the women and their situations.

The names of all four women appear on a recent list of prisoners held in the women's prison sent to us by the El Salvador Commission for Human Rights, and therefore we can hope that they are still alive.

Lilian Mercedes Letona, 27 years old is a BA, commander of the FMLN responsible for the popular Militia of the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) and founder of the Popular Leagues 28 of February (LP-28). She was arrested on January 9, 1981.

Vida Cuadra, 28 years old was a journalist on the newspaper, *El Independiente* and was arrested along with seven other members of staff on 1981 January 15.

Ana Margarita Gastiazoro, 31 years old is a teacher and was arrested on May 13 1981 along with two others at the institute of Social Studies in San Salvador. All three arrested were members of the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR), a social democratic party and member of the FDR. On 21 September last Amnesty received a letter from Mario Antonio Solano, Minister of Justice in El Salvador, which was very evasive but did assure Amnesty that Ana Margarita was being held in a penal institution.

Pastora Rodrigues, 32 years old, is a businesswoman who was arrested on 14 January 1981.

OTHER ACTIVITIES: The Women's Commission have organised a contingent for the March 28 demo against US intervention in El Salvador. If you want to join us, please assemble behind the women's banner at Hyde Park Corner at 12.30.

We continue to speak at meetings and will be participating vigorously in events for International Women's Day. Please get in touch with us if you need a speaker.

We are in the process of producing a slide show from images in the El Salvador photographic exhibition. We will also produce postcards from some of these photos and will let you know when they are ready for distribution.

After a halting beginning, we have finally laid definite plans to produce a pamphlet about the situation of women in El Salvador. We'll keep you informed of our progress.

THE WOMEN'S COMMISSION OF THE EL SALVADOR SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN, 29 Islington Park Street, London N1.

GUATEMALA: A PEOPLE AT WAR

Since 1954 the U.S. government has played a key role in supporting the unjust social and economic structure against which the Guatemalan people are struggling. In that year it financed and directed the counter-revolution that overthrew the reformist government of Arbenz which had threatened U.S. economic interests in the country, particularly the plantations of the United Fruit Company. This intervention ended the only democratic period in the country's history.

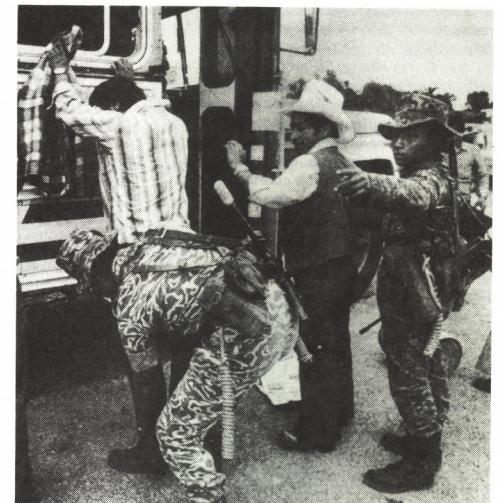
In the mid-1960's the U.S. designed and provided millions of dollars of equipment and training for a counter-insurgency strategy aimed at destroying the popular insurgent movement that had developed in response to the counter-revolution. This strategy involved a program of minimal reform and modernisation, coupled with outright repression. In its first stage the U.S. called for a return to constitutionality and for elections, a tactic that could succeed as large sectors of the popular movement still believed in the possibility of peaceful reform. Elections were held in March 1966, and were easily won by Mendez Montenegro, a popular figure from the Arbenz period. But to assume office he was forced to sign a pact with the army, signing over most of his power to them. The popular movement, unaware of the pact, fell prey to the U.S. designed trap. The army withdrew from the guerrilla areas in the north-east and the guerrillas let down their security measures and demobilised.

During several months of apparent calm the army changed radically. Under Colonel Osorio counter-insurgency began in earnest with massive U.S. assistance. Death squads were set up and the army was reorganised. Then the army went onto the offensive, occupying villages and murdering all of those suspected of guerrilla sympathies. The guerrilla stronghold areas were napalmed during 1966 and 1967 with the help of U.S. Air Force planes based in Panama. The repression was aimed not only at known militants, but against their families and friends. Between 1966 and 1968, 8,000 people were assassinated and the revolutionary movement was dealt a serious military setback from which it did not recover until the late 1970's.

Between 1950 and 1976 a total of 3,213 Guatemalan army and police officers were trained by the United States. Amongst these officers were the last three Presidents, and the Ministers of Defence and Army Chiefs of Staff of the last four governments.

During the Carter administration military aid was suspended due to differences over human rights. But the infrastructure necessary for institutionalised repression had already been installed with U.S. help. The suspension of direct military aid enabled the U.S. government to publicly disassociate itself from the flagrant brutality of the Guatemalan regime. Meanwhile, it ensured that U.S. investments in the country would be protected by encouraging its allies, particularly Israel and Argentina, to continue to supply and train the Guatemalan security forces. U.S. economic interests in the country are strong: investments total about 350 million dollars. The majority of the 77 transnational companies with interests in the country have their headquarters in the United States. Even more important are Guatemala's strategically valuable mineral resources and geographical location.

In the four years since President Lucas Garcia assumed office in 1978, the permanent repression has been intensified. The ferocity of this repression has been denounced internationally with figures of assassination and torture that are hard to rival. In Guatemala there are no political prisoners; no one who has ever been detained for political reasons has ever reached the courts alive. In few countries is it as dangerous to struggle for the simplest democratic rights. Trade Union and popular leaders, and even members of Congress recognised by the regime, who have dared to defend popular interests, or to express any opposition to government policies have been assassinated in open disregard for international opinion. In the last two years even the



right-wing Christian Democratic party has become a target — 238 Christian Democrat leaders have 'disappeared' in the last 18 months — as the regime has been systematically eliminating any possibility of a political 'centre' that the U.S. might attempt to foster, as it tried in El Salvador.

Conservative estimates place the figure for political murders by the government since 1978 at about 15,000. The total since 1954 is 83,500.

Amnesty International's report 'Guatemala: a government program of political murder' confirmed that the 'right-wing death squads' are organised and controlled by the highest officials in the Guatemalan government, including the President. The reports of these atrocities often appear in the British press, attributed by the North American newsgencies in their function of disinforming international opinion, to 'unknown extremists'.

This repression, or what the U.S. calls 'justified excesses by an authoritarian regime' must be understood as the logical outgrowth of the system, the only way that the minority can continue its control in the face of growing popular opposition. The objective is to paralyse all popular organisation and struggle through terror. But there is a limit beyond which terror no longer functions and instead becomes a source of commitment and determination to struggle. In Guatemala it has created a new awareness that the objective conditions make a peaceful transformation of society impossible.

This limit was passed on January 31st, 1980, when police and military stormed a peaceful occupation of the Spanish Embassy using flamethrowers. 39 people including Embassy staff were burned to death. The embassy had been occupied by leaders of popular organisations to draw international attention to the mass murder of Indians in El Quiche province by the Guatemalan army.

One year after this massacre six popular organisations (or 'revolutionary mass organisations') announced the formation of the 'January 31st' Popular Front (FP-31) based on a common appreciation of the methods and objectives of the popular struggle. The best known of these organisations is the Peasant Unity Committee (CUC) which has played an important role in previous attempts to establish effective mass opposition to the regime, and had achieved international fame in February and March 1980 when it organised 70,000 agricultural workers on sugar and cotton plantations in a successful strike for higher

wages. The other organisations in the FP-31 are formed by industrial workers, shanty-town inhabitants, revolutionary christians, secondary school and university students.

Another organisation that emerged in this period was the Democratic Front Against Repression, which since many of its leaders were forced into exile, has worked principally at the international level denouncing the regime's atrocities.

The Reagan administration has become alarmed by the resurgence of the Guatemalan popular movement, a resurgence that has gone largely unreported in the British press. Already some limited aid and training has been provided through loopholes in the Congressional ban imposed under the Carter administration. According to Newsweek (1/3/82) top U.S. officials want to restore military aid and as it is impossible for human rights 'improvements' to be expected, Washington has asked Lucas Garcia to drop Guatemala's claim to Belize. If he complies, which is also unlikely, the U.S. will resume 'non-lethal' aid, such as helicopters and spare parts, on a much larger scale.

In December 1981 a delegation from the FP-31 visited Britain during a European tour to raise solidarity for their struggle. Below we publish some statements by the delegation regarding the present situation and the aims of the FP-31. Also reproduced are testimonies describing the struggle of the industrial workers and the involvement of the Indian peoples.

THE PEOPLE MUST PERFORM THEIR ROLE IN THE POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Statements by a representative of the 'January 31st' Popular Front (FP-31)

Guatemala today is in a state of war between two antagonistic forces: the regular army of the military regime is confronting the people's revolutionary political-military and mass organisations. Today the regime led by President Lucas Garcia has only one option left to it: repression. This takes the form of **SELECTIVE** repression in the cities and towns — political assassination directed against trade unionists, political leaders and activists, anyone opposed to the regime. In the countryside we see **MASSIVE** repression where whole villages — men, women, old people, tiny infants — have been slaughtered by the regime's security forces.

On the other hand the popular revolutionary movement has been advancing in a way that today gives greater possibilities of victory than we have ever known in the past. I say this without being triumphalistic but because of the massive participation of the people, and in particular the indigenous peoples who are the majority, in the process for change.

Our possibility for victory also arises from the problems within the ruling classes. At the economic level there is a severe crisis shown in the flight of capital, the drying up of foreign credit and of foreign and domestic investment, recession and unemployment. The foreign and national bosses are closing down their industries and transferring their assets abroad which demonstrates their fear of a popular victory. There are also growing differences within the dominant classes; the traditional productive sectors — the agricultural and industrial oligarchy — are finding their participation in the government increasingly curtailed by the bureaucratic bourgeois interests associated with the Lucas Garcia group.

An important element in the panorama has been the independence of Belize, an issue which demonstrated internationally the political and military impotence of the Lucas Garcia regime. The big plantation owners had intended to seize the neighbouring territory for their own use. But a majority of governments in the Organisation of American States opposed Lucas Garcia's ambitions. Despite all his rhetoric he was unable to act. This has clearly revealed that the Guatemalan army exists exclusively for the internal repression of the popular masses. The Belize issue converted the idea of the 'glorious army for the defence of national sovereignty' into an empty slogan.

At this moment the Lucas Garcia regime is intending to use the electoral farce, to be held in March 1982, as a possibility for repairing its international image. The eight parties that will par-

GUATEMALA

HEROES 31 DE ENERO

POR UN GOBIERNO REVOLUCIONARIO, POPULAR Y DEMOCRATICO



ticipate in no way represent the people's interests. In Guatemala there is a tradition that the Minister of Defence becomes President of the Republic. Today it is the turn of General Angel Arribal Guevara, who recently resigned his post in order to enter the electoral game. He is the candidate for the clique currently represented by Lucas Garcia, and he is being supported by a coalition of three right-wing parties that describes itself as the Popular Democratic Front. Besides the right-wing parties and the Christian Democrats, the Social Democratic F.U.R. is standing, but this party is currently split — its most honest members are in exile where they have opposed participation in the electoral farce as this would mean acting as an accomplice in hiding the true repressive face of Guatemala.

But the people are not deceived by this game. This is shown in the abstention rates in the last two electoral frauds. In 1974 it was 58% and in 1978 it was 70%. Of the 30% votes cast in 1978, 22% were spoiled or blank votes, and we call it a fraud because Lucas Garcia had to manipulate the 8% to become President.

Our organisation, the FP-31, has watched the unitarian process developing between the four political-military organisations with satisfaction. Today the guerrillas are not small 'focos' as the regime had tried to portray them. Their actions of the past year have forced the Army Chief of Staff to publicly recognise that Guatemala is in a state of war. These actions have included the seizure of the most important provincial towns, including Esquintla which is the centre of the agro-export plantations and where the regime keeps its largest concentrations of troops. Despite the supply of weapons, technology and advisors by the governments of Israel, Argentina, Chile and the United States, the regime has not been able to check their advance.

The popular masses are playing an important role in this process, through our FP-31 which was created to answer the repressive policy of the regime. We carry out the work of educating the masses politically. In the rural areas we have conducted wide literacy campaigns, teaching the Indian peoples how to speak and read Spanish which also helps in politicisation. We try to organise and lead the masses in their daily struggles, but from a new perspective and using methods of work that

helps them to avoid the repression. A principle objective is to prepare the masses for insurrectional activity.

The principle characteristic of the strategy of revolutionary popular war is that it is the work of the masses. Its highest expression is the guerrilla war being fought by the revolutionary organisations. However, not all of us can participate in the guerrilla war. There are not sufficient firearms for all the people, so we must organise ourselves and contribute with the force of our numbers, whether it is through strikes or other activities such as sabotage or paramilitary activities that contribute to the attrition against the regime. We put pressure on the regime by mobilising in the capital or in different parts of the country, according to the political situation, and this has forced the regime to decentralise and disperse its repressive forces. These activities are preparing the way for insurrectional activities that in combination with the guerrilla war will bring victory. The example of the Salvadoran revolutionaries demonstrates the basic importance of the masses in the total effort of the revolutionary war.

The triumph of the Nicaraguan revolution and the victories

being won by the Salvadorean revolutionaries are an essential aspect of our fight. We think that the best support that we can offer them is to advance our mass struggle in Guatemala. We must tie the hands of the military regime so that it cannot send its army against the Salvadorean people.

The revolutionary mass organisations of the FP-31 are committed to put their best efforts into this work. The aim of our struggle is to overthrow the regime and the military, political and social forces that are its foundations, and to install a government that will represent the democratic, popular and revolutionary sectors of the society. We respect all organisations that are contributing to this struggle in any form, whatever their level of working, and we regard unity as essential. The mass organisations and the people in general must perform their role in the popular revolutionary war, which we understand to be the political and military struggle of all of our people. Their committed struggle has won them the right to call for international solidarity. The democratic forces internationally have an important role to play in our fight.

TESTIMONY OF AN INDIAN WOMAN

My name is Rigoberta Menchu Tum. I am a representative of the 'Vicente Menchu' Revolutionary Christians, a revolutionary mass organisation that forms part of the January 31st Popular Front. My father was Vicente Menchu, an Indian. For years he carried out a truly heroic resistance to the landowners' constant abuses, until he died, burned alive in the Spanish Embassy on January 31st, 1980.

I have experienced in the depths of my being the marginalisation of my race, the taunts and the murders against what is mine, my family, my people.

On December 9th, 1979, my 16 year old brother Patrocino was captured and tortured for several days and then taken with twenty other young men to the square in Chajul. An officer of Lucas García's army of murderers ordered the prisoners to be paraded in a line. Then he started to insult and threaten the inhabitants of the village, who were forced to come out of their houses to witness the event. I was with my mother, and we saw Patrocino; he had had his tongue cut out and his toes cut off. The officer jackal made a speech. Every time he paused the soldiers beat the Indian prisoners.

When he finished his ranting, the bodies of my brother and the other prisoners were swollen, bloody, unrecognisable. It was monstrous but they were still alive.

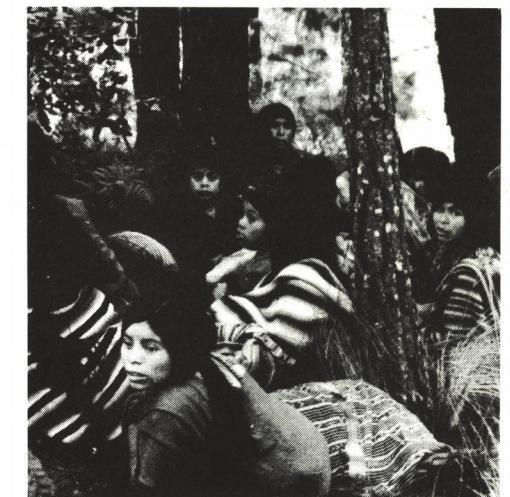
They were thrown on the ground and drenched with gasoline. The soldiers set fire to the wretched bodies with torches and the captain laughed like a hyena and forced the inhabitants of Chajul to watch. This was his objective — that they should be terrified and witness the punishment given to the 'guerrillas'.

The whole village was crying, and after a time the people became filled with anger and courage. Their indignation and courage led them to rise up against the army and throw them out of Chajul. Then the people watched over the bodies and gave them a Christian burial.

I am part of these sorrows. All of my people are a part of them; of the government violence; of the permanent war, where kidnapping is an official institution; of the exploitation, oppression and discrimination. I am 22 years old. My sorrow and my struggle is also the sorrow and the struggle of a whole oppressed people that is fighting for its liberation.

We, the indigenous, are massively joining the struggle because we know that it is the only way by which we can free ourselves from the misery, exploitation and marginalisation. We fully understand that this course is the revolutionary participation of the whole people in the establishment of a democratic, popular and revolutionary government.

I am travelling to different countries to publicise the Christians' participation in the revolutionary torrent of my people. From the time when I could start to think, I have been a part of this struggle that the indigenous peoples have sustained against the landowners, especially in Quiche province. My father struggled for 22 years against the landowners to prevent them evicting him and his neighbours from our small plots. Since a long time past we, the indigenous, have been forced to live in areas where the land is not fit for cultivating the basic crops we need to



Indian women hiding in the jungle...

be able to eat; in areas of intense cold. In the planting season we go to search for suitable land and then we sow it. When the time comes to harvest the maize, beans and wheat, the landowners come to evict us from the land that we have cultivated.

My mother was a leader of the San Miguel Uspantan community in Quiche province. She was kidnapped by the army. They tortured her for twelve days and, after suffering terrible pain, she died. They exhibited her clothes in the municipal capital of the province, hoping that her children would come to collect them and in this way to capture us as well. When they realised that we were not coming to reclaim her clothes and her body, they dumped her corpse on a hill near the community with a permanent guard so that no one could collect it until it had been eaten by the animals.

The criminal and genocidal government of Lucas García has dedicated itself to massacres, believing that this will hold back our peoples' struggle. Instead the reaction has been whole families going into the mountains, and others have remained in the communities and towns consolidating the masses' revolutionary struggle.

It has fallen to me to raise the banner of my parents and my brother. I am not alone; it is an entire poor people that is in the revolutionary torrent.

Today our work is to defeat the electoral farce. We will not let them bring their propaganda into our communities. They have always come with offers of land but what have they given us? Evictions and torture.

THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS' NUCLEUS (NOR) — MEMBER OF THE FP-31

The working class in Guatemala is very young and not very numerous. Our country is basically agricultural, not industrial. This working class, whose development has been conditioned by the stagnation of the national economy, has in every way been the permanent target of repression which has forced it to make significant advances in its levels of organisation.

Between 1970 and 1976 the workers organised themselves in trade unions that had a certain margin of freedom to struggle for better wages and working conditions. During this period it was possible to form new unions and to expand the existing ones. Our small but very militant working class increased its political awareness in this period.

As is well known, from 1978 the government directed a very fierce repression against the workers and the other popular sectors of Guatemalan society. This government, headed by President Lucas García, was tremendously repressive and did not respect any of the freedoms contained in the country's legal order.

During 1978 and 1979 the trade unions were the target of repressive actions. Their leaders were persecuted and many unions were destroyed in this process, which continued into 1980, when it became impossible to fight for economic demands. Put it another way: by 1980 the trade unions could no longer mobilise around economic and social issues.

To be caught with a trade union bulletin became an act of subversion as far as the government was concerned, and it cost the lives of many trade union leaders and activists. This situation has forced the workers to find new methods of organising and struggling.

From that time a struggle for demands became a political struggle. The levels of misery, hunger and exploitation are very high and a struggle against a particular boss becomes a struggle against the system itself. The brutality of the repression has meant that the workers have had to go beyond the limits imposed by the system, beyond the Guatemalan laws. In my country to demand a better wage, to demand better working conditions is to be answered with repression.

In 1980 the industrial workers could not carry out a single strike. Scores of workers have been assassinated, many more forced to leave the country. The strike in the Coca Cola factory illustrates this situation: the entire strike committee was assassinated, their mutilated bodies left outside the factory as a warning.

The Revolutionary Workers' Nucleus (NOR) has arisen within this state of repression. Not all of the workers' organisations, which can no longer work in the same way as previously, have been able to develop their organisational ability to cope with the concrete situation.

We began advising the union leaders to take security measures, to begin self-defence. This perspective has given us, the Federation of Guatemalan Labour (FGT), good results. We hold our meetings inside the factories rather than in the union offices as previously, this gives us some guarantee against the repression.

It's basically the most politically conscious workers who are doing this. The FGT workers have suffered less from the repression than, for example, the National Labour Confederation (CNT). Thirty of the CNT's leaders and activists were kidnapped from their head office, shortly followed by another seventeen members.

Today the NOR is the organisation of the politically conscious workers and it must advise and lead the less conscious workers. It must teach them how to carry out a strike under the present conditions, how to erect a barricade, teach them about politics and the international situation.



GUATEMALA'S GUERRILLAS FORM UNIFIED FRONT

In what is a fundamental advance for the popular struggle in Guatemala, the country's four armed revolutionary organisations announced the formation of a unified front on February 7th. The four organisations, GUERRILLA ARMY OF THE POOR (EGP), ORGANISATION OF THE PEOPLE IN ARMS (ORPA), REBEL ARMED FORCES (FAR), and GUATEMALAN LABOUR PARTY LEADERSHIP NUCLEUS (PGT) have created the NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY UNITY OF GUATEMALA (URNG) which will progressively unify the leadership of the struggle based on the strategy of revolutionary popular war.

The government platform for which the URNG are fighting was publicised in a statement that read:

"The revolutionary, patriotic, popular and democratic government that we will build in Guatemala vows to the people of Guatemala and the peoples of the world to fulfill the following five basic points of its program:

1. The revolution will put an end forever to the repression against the people and will guarantee to the citizens life and peace, the supreme rights of human beings.
2. The revolution will lay the groundwork for solving the fundamental needs of the overwhelming majority of the people, in putting an end to the economic and political domination of the wealthy, repressive national and foreign minority that rule Guatemala.
3. The revolution will guarantee the equality of Indians and non-Indians, putting an end to cultural oppression and discrimination.
4. The revolution will guarantee the creation of a new society in which all the patriotic, popular and democratic sectors will be represented in the government.
5. The revolution will guarantee the policy of non-alignment and international co-operation required by the poor countries in order to attain development in today's world, on the basis of the peoples' self-determination."

In the week following the unity agreement guerrilla actions were stepped up throughout Guatemala. Six radio stations, three in the capital and the others in provincial capitals, were seized and a manifesto was broadcast announcing the creation of the URNG. These included the news radio "El Independiente" which has the largest audience and was held for twenty minutes on Saturday the 14th. Scores of bombs caused extensive damage to government, military and commercial buildings, and guerrillas dressed in olive green uniforms and red scarves occupied the campus of San Carlos University and held a meeting with the students explaining the need for "stepping up the guerrilla struggle until the power of the Guatemalan and foreign rich is toppled".



'The killings in Guatemala are at least as bad as they are in El Salvador, as far as civilians are concerned, with a known minimum of 100 a week slaughtered, either by death squads or in the course of military operations. However reliable sources indicate that the true death toll may be as high as 100 a day, because of the racial quality of the war, in which the Indian population is facing the prospect of eventual extinction.' The Observer, 28th February, 1982.

HONDURAS TO SERVE AS SPRINGBOARD FOR FOREIGN TROOPS

On January 9th the Popular Liberation Movement (MPL), known as the "Cinchoneros" charged that the groundwork is being laid in Honduras for the arrival of thousands of soldiers and officers from the armies of Argentina, Chile and Venezuela.

A communiqué distributed by the Honduran revolutionary organisation in the capital, Tegucigalpa, reports that the first contingents from those countries would arrive in late February or early March with the connivance of the Honduran armed forces. The MPL communiqué stated that this movement was part of a campaign to use Honduras as a springboard for attacks against liberation forces in El Salvador and Guatemala.

The MPL said that to provide a legal cover for this move these governments, who are acting under the guidance of the Reagan administration, would resort to the Inter-American Reciprocal Aid Treaty (IRAT). This would be accompanied with new false charges against Nicaragua and Cuba.

The MPL said that the Honduran Government intends to heighten tension along the border with Nicaragua. It will claim that there has been an occupation of its territory by Sandinista troops from Nicaragua using Soviet planes and weapons. According to the MPL the first move in this propaganda campaign has been made with the Honduran Foreign Minister, Cesar Elvir Sierra's official note blaming Nicaragua for the killing of 200 Nicaraguan "refugees" in Honduras, a charge refuted by the Nicaraguans, and later withdrawn.

The communiqué also noted that the Honduran army and Government were "relocating" thousands of Salvadorean refugees from the border area with El Salvador. This area is being cleared of civilians to facilitate joint military operations against the positions of the FMLN in the Salvadorean provinces of Chalatenango, Cabanas and Morazan. "The refugees are being taken at bayonet point some 50 kms from the border to create a free zone for the IRAT forces to operate in."

They also note that 150 U.S. military personnel have been in Honduras for some time and that extreme right-wing Honduran officers had been given the green light for intervention from Honduran President-elect Robert Suazo Cordova.

DEATH SQUADS STEP UP OPERATIONS

On February 17th five more bullet-ridden bodies were found in a secret burial ground 12 miles from Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital, bringing the total number of victims in four days to 15. Honduran police said that they expected to find more victims in that spot. None of the victims was identified but a security spokesman said that they were "left-wing extremists".

February 13th. — The arrival of 63 United States and Argentinian military advisers in the Honduran capital was denounced by the Honduran Council for Peace and Friendship with Nicaragua (COHPAN). Since the previous week sixty U.S. Vietnam veterans and three high-ranking Argentinian officers had been in Tegucigalpa, where they are staying in the Maya hotel in the city centre. The entire floor where they are now housed has been rented by the U.S. Embassy. COHPAN said that the groups mission was to "direct and organise activities against the Popular Revolution of Nicaragua, and to advise the Honduran army in actions against the guerrillas in El Salvador".

NICARAGUAN FOREIGN MINISTER MIGUEL D'ESCOTO: "We are not a second Cuba. We are a free Nicaragua."

Q. U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig said Nicaragua is directly aiding the rebels in El Salvador with weapons. Is this true?

A. Secretary Haig makes this accusation to justify the ever increasing American involvement in El Salvador. I challenge him to prove that such arms traffic is taking place. Haig's charge is a lie to make less repugnant the Reagan Administration's criminal intervention in the Salvadoran struggle. Last week the President of the U.S. went before Congress and said that the Duarte regime is committed to respect human rights. The truth in El Salvador is that genocide is being committed against the people. This attitude of the Reagan Administration does irreparable harm to the U.S. in Central America.

Q. Secretary Haig says the U.S. will do whatever is necessary to prevent the overthrow of the Salvadoran government. What do you think of that?

A. It's bellicose and highly irresponsible. There is no doubt in my mind that military escalation in Central America could only end in a general conflict that would extend far beyond the borders of El Salvador. Rest assured the people of Central America would not stand idly by and watch the disembarkation of U.S. troops in their ports, on their land. They will fight.

Q. Do you think El Salvador's rebels can win?

A. I have no doubt that the people of El Salvador, like all other peoples of Central America, will be liberated. I cannot say that the guerrillas in El Salvador will win tonight, or tomorrow. But no amount of arms or threats from any outside power will stand in their way. The Nicaraguan experience is a clear example of that fact.

Q. Isn't there a personal conflict for you, being a Catholic priest and a foreign minister?

A. There is no conflict. I am a Maryknoll missionary. I have always regarded my vocation as service to the people, especially to the poor. I have permission from my superiors to be doing what I'm doing. You remember that Pope Paul VI said that you achieve stability and peace by constructing justice. For Central America, it will mean stabilization when the guerrillas in El Salvador win.

Q. What is the role of the Catholic Church in Latin America?

A. The Catholic Church traditionally played a role of tending to souls, forgetting that God created human beings who have bodies. Unfortunately the church preached resignation in the face of injustice. But (in recent years) the Catholic Church in Latin America has assumed the risks of speaking for those who were silenced or afraid to speak.

Q. There are those who describe your country as a second Cuba, preparing military airfields for Soviet MIG fighters. Is this so?

A. We are fixing airstrips on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of my country. The money for these repairs comes from a loan made to Nicaragua by the Central American Bank, that was originally given to Somoza for precisely the purpose of repairing these airfields. The logic that we are repairing them for MIGs escapes me. We are not a second Cuba.

Q. What has caused the revolution in Nicaragua? And what are the results?

A. We wanted to alter a system of privileges to a small minority which looked upon our country as their property. And these few got richer while the masses grew poorer. We had a high infant mortality rate. Three hundred thousand of our 500,000 families were living in hovels beneath the dignity of human beings. We had the highest illiteracy rate in the Southern Hemisphere. So the people decided to fight. In 1980, the first year after the revolution, Nicaragua showed the highest rate of G.N.P. growth in Latin America. We have the smallest rate of inflation in Central

America. Nicaragua is the only one of Central America's countries which is considered worthy by the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Central American Bank.

Q. How are your relations with Honduras?

A. After Somoza was overthrown, some 5,000 of his national guardsmen went to Honduras near our border and began to launch incursions against us. We finally met with Honduran authorities and agreed to organize joint patrols on our border to lessen the possibility of incursions. They would also (block) the traffic of arms from Nicaragua to El Salvador, via Honduras, of which we are accused by the U.S. The patrols have not yet started, due to systematic postponements by the Honduran government.

Q. What is being done by U.S. aid to El Salvador, some \$300 million?

A. It's money going down the drain. It doesn't help people. It worsens the image of the U.S. as an incorrigible ally of tyrants and dictators.

Q. Ruben Zamoora, chief spokesman for the Salvadoran guerrilla movement, says the U.S. would need 30,000 U.S. Marines to win the war. Is that right?

A. Thirty thousand U.S. Marines would turn Central America into another Viet Nam. If the Reagan Administration thinks it would look like Hopalong Cassidy riding to the rescue, they couldn't be more mistaken. Nothing they threaten, their superior weapons and their planes bombing our cities, could force us to bend.

Q. Has your country become a surrogate of the Soviet Union?

A. Such nonsense. We want better relations with the U.S. We are about to exchange ambassadors, and that is good. When I first met Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, I told him that we wanted to be given the opportunity to trust Washington. But in the meantime, I said, he should not be surprised if we used strident language from time to time. I explained that the wounds and scars in the history of our relations were still open and ugly. In the first year and a half of the Carter Administration I felt we were making strides, and then anything positive deteriorated with the arrival of the Reagan Administration. They talk as if we export revolution. We export coffee, meat, sugar, wood.



GUATEMALAN EXILES DECLARE SUPPORT FOR GUERRILLAS

A coalition of prominent Guatemalan opposition leaders living in exile declared its support for the Guatemalan national liberation movement seeking to overthrow what it described as "the most repressive regime in Latin America". The Guatemalan Committee of Patriotic Unity, made up of union leaders, priests, university professors, former government officials and other professionals gave a news conference in Mexico City on February 17th where it announced its position.

Guillermo Toriello Garrido, foreign minister for Guatemala in the late 1940's, and a spokesperson for the Committee, described the formation of the NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY UNITY OF GUATEMALA by the country's four revolutionary organizations, as "the only road that will take us to victory".



El Salvador: DEMONSTRATE

against torture and murder
against election fraud
against US intervention
against Tory support for US policy

**MARCH
28**

Assembly Speakers: Corner 12.30pm
Rally in Trafalgar Square 2.30pm
Speakers include:
MICHAEL FOOT MP, ALAN SAPPER TUC;
DR SALVADOR MONCADA, EDL;
LORD AVEBURY, Liberal Party;
SISTER PAMELA, CIR;
FENNER BROCKWAY;
Chair: STAN NEVENS MP
**PLEASE SEND \$1
FOR EL SALVADOR**

Further information: El Salvador Solidarity Campaign,
29 Islington Park Street, London N1. Phone 01-359 2270

AFFILIATE TO THE EL SALVADOR SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

The El Salvador Solidarity Campaign exists to support the people of El Salvador in their struggle to achieve social justice and freedom. For this they urgently need the support of the British people. By affiliating to our campaign you can make a valuable contribution and be kept informed about the latest news from El Salvador, as well as events taking place in Britain.

I/we wish to affiliate to the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign
I/We enclose affiliation fee.

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Affiliation rates are £5 for individuals and £10 for organisations, please make cheques payable to the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign and send them to our address:

El Salvador Solidarity Campaign,
29 Islington Park Street
London N1. (telephone: 01-359 2270)

WEDNESDAY MARCH 24th — ANNIVERSARY OF
ROMERO'S DEATH

12.00-3.00: Vigil outside the Salvadorean Embassy.
7.00 p.m. Special Service at Westminster Abbey.

El Salvador Committee for
Human Rights 01 226 6747

GUATEMALA

For enquiries and offers of support please contact:
GUATEMALA WORKING GROUP,
c/o L.A.B. 1 Amwell Street, London EC1.